School Dental Screening Requirement
Frequently Asked Questions

1) **When was the requirement effective?**
The requirement began during the 2008-2009 school year.

2) **Who does the requirement include?**
All students newly enrolling in kindergarten and 9th grade in an Iowa public or accredited non-public elementary school or high school are required to have proof of a dental screening.

3) **Does the requirement include home-schooled or foreign exchange students?**
No, those students are not considered as "enrolled" in an Iowa public or accredited non-public school.

4) **What is the timeline for a screening to be done?**
For kindergarten, a screening completed no earlier than age 3, but no later than four months after enrollment is acceptable. For 9th grade, a screening completed no earlier than one year prior to enrollment and no later than four months after enrollment is acceptable.

5) **Who can provide a screening?**
For kindergarten students, the requirement allows a licensed dentist, dental hygienist, physician, physician assistant, registered nurse, or advanced registered nurse practitioner to provide a screening. For 9th grade students, a screening must be provided by a licensed dentist or dental hygienist. Screenings performed by out-of-state providers are acceptable. The goal is that every child has an exam or screening by a dentist. However, due to barriers in accessing care this may not be possible for all families.

6) **Is training available for physicians, physician assistants, or nurses to do the screenings?**
For quality assurance and consistency, IDPH makes training and training materials available for non-dental health care providers. Trainings may be provided locally by dental hygienists serving as I-Smile™ Coordinators.

7) **What screening documentation is acceptable?**
An IDPH Certificate of Dental Screening is the only approved form and the current version is available at: http://www.idph.state.ia.us/OHDS/OralHealth.aspx?prog=OHC&pg=Screenings. To be valid, the certificate must be complete and signed. Providers are encouraged to assist with completing the student section if that information is known.

   An authorized provider (i.e. dentist, dental hygienist, physician, physician assistant, or registered nurse) may transfer information onto the IDPH certificate from another health document that contains the required information. The IDPH certificate must be signed by the recorder and the other health document should be attached. Note: Although all versions of the Certificate of Dental Screening are acceptable, IDPH recommends that the current version be used if transferring information from another health document.

8) **What if a student does not have a dentist or has difficulty obtaining a screening certificate?**
A child without proof of a dental screening will not be prevented from attending school. If families have difficulty meeting the requirement, the IDPH and local I-Smile™ Coordinators can provide assistance to help ensure that the dental screenings are obtained.

9) **When do students need to turn in the Certificates of Dental Screening to the schools?**
The rules do not specify a certain amount of time. To assure ample time to comply with the audit requirement, IDPH recommends that the certificates be collected at school enrollment or as soon as possible.

10) **How will the screenings be reported to IDPH?**
State statute requires an audit report be sent to IDPH from each local board of health by May 31st for the preceding school year. IDPH works with boards of health, I-Smile™ Coordinators, and schools to assure the audit is done.

11) **Are exemptions allowed?**
Exemptions are allowed on an individual basis for religious and financial hardship reasons. For a religious exemption, the Certificate of Dental Screening Exemption must be signed by a parent or guardian and notarized. For a financial hardship exemption, the Certificate of Dental Screening Exemption must be signed by a dentist, dental hygienist, physician, physician assistant, registered nurse, or advanced registered nurse practitioner. Note: With exemption forms, the authorized health care providers may sign for either elementary or high school grade levels.

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